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Age in which we live.

Edwin Latham Gardner
Yale University.

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1862

pertain

[illegible]

[illegible] [illegible] our age of activity [illegible] and increasing velocity [illegible] can no more keep up with all the strides being made in every department of human knowledge. Every thing now, is pushed forward with the power of steam and with the velocity of lightning. The Science of Medicine is not behind any other department of human learning and upon the laborers in this extended field, the sun never sets, for as soon as one class becomes weary and retires to rest, others rise to carry on the work, and so, without intermission one continuous effort is being made to improve that which is [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] new material to the vast structure already [illegible] [illegible] work of [illegible] [illegible] [illegible].

[illegible] an article of [illegible] to
receive the truth. [illegible]
to be [illegible] good argument beyond the
possibility of proving; and in these
days but little would be received on
[illegible], every thing has to be examined
with care, and men are unwilling
to receive any thing as truth be-
cause some great man has before
pronounced it. The most rigid
criticism is brought to bear on
every assumption, it matters not
whence it originated and no one
stands so high in any department
as to screen either his premises
or conclusions from the most search-
ing analysis. The ancients receiv-
ed the decisions of their own [illegible]
without questioning their truth; but
now, we must try the declarations of
our oracles by a [illegible]. But
where we [illegible] them [illegible]

[illegible] established truth [illegible], [illegible]
should be, [illegible] to "pro[illegible]
[illegible] hold fast of that which [illegible]
[illegible] a maxim [illegible]
[illegible] uttered.
It may be induced to infer that the
Entire field of Science has been exp-
lored, and that the precious jewels
have all been appropriated by those
who have preceded us. This is a very
great mistake, as well might we suppose
that the mighty depths of the ocean have
been ploughed, and that man has
become familiar with all that
is therein, which can enlighten his
mind or fill his soul with profound
reverence for Him, who has written
upon the surface of the mighty deep
that the hand that performed it [illegible].
As well conclude that the mountains
[illegible] [illegible] yielded, and that the [illegible]
precious things which they contain

had been abstracted by some from the Science [illegible] which they are capable of furnishing, has succeeded its last link; — unreasonably and erroneously stepping at once, to the absurd conclusion that the animal vegetable and mineral kingdoms have all been exhausted, and there remains nothing more by which man's stock of knowledge can be increased. It is only necessary for us to take a glance at the vast field that lies before us in order to be convinced that there is work enough, yet undone, to occupy the time of many succeeding generations, if, indeed it can ever be accomplished.

This speculation can only be met by the ambitious, the industrious and persevering.

[illegible] as beautifully [illegible] some objects which invite our attention, both on account of their mysteries as well as the unfinished state in which we find them.

Physiology the most [illegible] of [illegible] Sciences, has been cultivated with a zeal paramount to [illegible], and has established in itself talents not surpassed in any other field.

The success which has attended the investigations of Physiologists is certainly most gratifying to the friends of this department of natural science, but after all that has been discovered, how much yet remains undeveloped and still claims further investigation.

The Anatomists demonstrate how wonderfully made organs which govern the body [illegible] to the [illegible]

Checking it to become the ruling agency [illegible] could be provided to keep it within its appropriate limits, but can he give us a true unexceptionable theory of the entire Circulation; how the blood is propelled to its ultimate destination; how it gets into the capillary vessels thence to the veins and back again to the heart. I ask can the anatomist or Physiologist give us a theory of action of this hydraulic apparatus free from all mistery, and one that will be free from all objection. The furnace from which the human man receives its heat upon which its life depends is still a contraverted question, and at this advanced time of our science no one can give a theory of animal heat, which will be universally received. Scientifically learned, and [illegible] scientific researches have been instituted in reference to the ductless glands, the spleen, the thymus, thyroid and suprarenal bodies, but still, it cannot be dogmatically assumed, that our knowledge in this department is perfected, and therefore, further research would promise no reward to the investigator. Perhaps this prolific subject may yet compensate some bold adventurer, as richly, as did the discovery of the circulation of the blood, or the introduction of auscultation in diagnosis of diseases of the heart.

Chemistry, that most invaluable science, valuable in almost any profession in life, is still susceptible of great improvements, and perhaps in nothing may more [illegible] be accomplished, than in this department. It is greatly to be regretted that —

Medical Gentlemen generally pay so little attention to it, deeming the attendance upon [illegible] which is the [illegible] of their profession. From this want of knowledge on this subject, [illegible] sad mistakes and hence much mischief is done, it is necessary for every one to determine to learn of the matter then, I would say, as the interest and reputation, the well being of Society, and the reliance of our profession, will call loudly upon us to study well this important branch.

In connection with Chemistry I would next refer to Materia Medica as having very strong claims on our attention. This department has been greatly enriched by the new discoveries of Chemistry and our list of medical agents has [illegible] more improved through the means then through many other [illegible] to accomplish much in this branch of [illegible] by being well versed in Chemical Science. An increase in the list of remedial agents is not so much to be desired, as is the concentration of their virtues into smaller bulk and a knowledge of their exact powers in controlling disease — We have already too great a list of medicines, many of which possess little or no power, and many others perhaps greatly overrated. Much remains to be done, before we can hope to have a Materia Medica, which, will ever approximate that which is desirable. Many men are apt to think that this is a very dry and uninteresting subject and that it [illegible]

from us the glory of [illegible]
no [illegible] to [illegible] the Continent
it. This I look upon as a grand
mistake, would it not [illegible]
the name of a man to posterity
as one of the greatest of benefactors
who should discover a certain
means of curing Tuberculosis, or
of eradicating the Scrofulous
diathesis? of certainly curing
fever in twenty four hours [illegible]
From our medical materials we must
discover these specifics if they are
ever found and why I would not
[illegible] this not [illegible] thing [illegible] p
ossible have been discovered also
before the time of Jenner's researches
of the possibility of finding a prevention
of the most loathsome of all diseases
[illegible] Small Pox. Until very recently
had it ever entered a man's head
that the [illegible]

[illegible] patent [illegible] the means next enjoying free from pain a comfortable nap?

And here perhaps we have the two or [illegible] of all that has been achieved by the mighty power [illegible] profession. And will we not be stimulated to make an effort to furnish at least one additional improvement to an already very extensive list of achievements, by which the world is incalculably benefited, through the labors of the most self-sacrificing and noble fraternity that ever operated for the good of their fellow creatures? Let us look for a moment at Practical Medicine which is the application of [illegible] of all the other departments of our science and I am sure we will be surprised to find how far short it falls of our expectations and of our [illegible] wishes that much more definite and connected has the laws of Physiology and Chemistry, the fundamental bases of our profession. Nor do we look for such precision and definiteness in the practice where we bring our principles to bear on disease. This is humiliating, but it is not discouraging, for in spite of all insurmountable obstacles progress of the most flattering character, is found to attend the researches of those who labor faithfully in this inviting field; the mode of interrogating nature in order to reach a rational diagnosis is so superior to that of a hundred years ago that we can [illegible] truthfully [illegible] great improvement has been made and immense advantages have been gained and through [illegible] single medicine mankind has been greatly lightened, and the [illegible] of our science greatly increased. But even in this there remains much, very much, yet to be studied before we will be able to diagnose every disease, so as to remove all doubt in reference to the correctness of our judgment,— practice in any case without proper knowledge of the functional and structural disturbances must, from the very nature of things, be founded on empiricism and thus is always hazardous even in the hands of the scientific; how much more so, when resorted to by the ignorant and [illegible] pretender, [illegible] [illegible] everyone that by our science we may [illegible] so detect diseases [illegible] rightly to treat in practice. Before we [illegible] in our minds to embrace an [illegible] [illegible], we [illegible] remember that medical experience is not seeing or treating a vast number of cases without principles derived from some analytical reasoning. Experience is a useless and blind guide. It may be always looking at disease, without ever deriving therefrom any profitable experience, if the practice or science is to be learned in this way. Why do we blanch our cheeks over the midnight lamp while poring over massive volumes in which are contained the collected wisdom of centuries past; why seclude ourselves from those gay and fascinating rounds of pleasure to encounter the horrors of the dissecting room for the purpose of becoming familiar with the machine with which we are to operate, and whose departure from a normal condition we are to correct; why visit the pest house whose very atmosphere is loaded while the seeds of disease [illegible] the unclean [illegible] in Cities, should be gathered in the harvest, [illegible] having [illegible] and deadly effectiveness [illegible] the purpose of putting [illegible] to the test of experience, if the [illegible] are aimed at the exposure of so much [illegible] and unselfish devotion [illegible] no account — [illegible] not [illegible] works of supererogation, the [illegible] which we should seek is founded on the correct observation of [illegible] the generalization of the facts [illegible] and the bringing up in the memory of all the observations and cases [illegible] the great improvements going on in our profession seem to promise us to better and happier days [illegible] we may not be discouraged, the hope of freedom may not perish [illegible] and introduce to us an age [illegible] freed from disease [illegible]

[illegible]
[illegible] with [illegible] and
unerring certainty, encountering the
deadly enemy and all the battle-
ground behind us and before us
and from our first entrance
into practice contend every inch
of the territory of life against disease
and death, and should we fail
to accomplish the highest object
of our ambition, to act, as it were
up in the last struggle of suffering
nature, with the consoling reflection
that we had to the best of our ability
and means, discharged faithfully
our duty.

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